



Milking The Pro's - Part 4

A series of interviews by Jake Friedman

If you're reading this newsletter, you love toons as much as I do. We made it our interests, our hobbies and/or our professions. But what exactly is out there for people who love toons? I had the opportunity to ask nearly a dozen people all over the animation spectrum the four main questions that are the crux of any good brain-tapping. In this, the final installment of the four-part article, el presidante Dave Levy talks about being a director for children's TV animation.

Our own Dave Levy was a director on **Blues Clues** and is an Animation Director on **Cartoon Pizza's** upcoming series for the **Noggin** channel, **Pinky Dinky Doo**.

JF: What's the hardest thing about being an animation director?

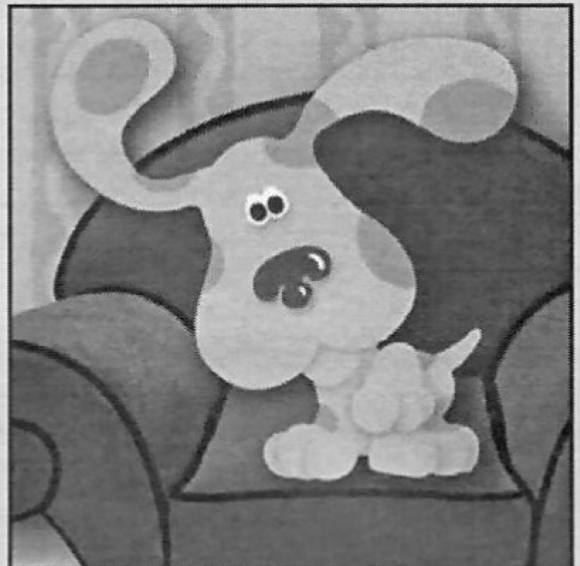
DL: An animation director's challenge is to juggle many responsibilities and duties at once. You're giving notes on upcoming episodes while you're delivering another to post and you've got episodes brewing in every stage in between at all times. Ok, that's the work. The harder challenge can be working with so many people. As an animation director, you usually report to your producer and or/ Supervising Director. Then there are healthy relationships that need to be maintained with department heads in storyboard, design, edit and so on. Oh yeah, then there's the whole bit where you direct the animators.

JF: What's the biggest perk?

DL: The biggest perk of being a director is that you get a chance to fail at a much larger scale with far greater consequences. I feel lucky that as a director I have an ongoing opportunity to further improve my skills in regards to craft, working with people, and in time/ deadline management. I've made my share of mistakes along the way and each one has been a learning experience. You never get it all right all of the time (How boring would that be?)

JF: Why did you choose to do what you're doing?

DL: I'm a big believer in choosing what you'd like to do by **DOING IT**. As you start your animation career you pay your dues and work your way up from there. I never made a goal that I would be a director by age 30 or anything like that. We're lucky in this business because nobody can stop us from being anything we want to be. Sure, you may have an entry level studio job by day, but by night you could be a storyboard artist, a designer, an animator, a director, a producer and much more—simply by working on your own independent animated film. If you are sincere and stick around long enough in this industry, opportunities will come up, but you need to make sure you are ready for them.



JF: How do I get to be an animation director?

DL: There's no one single path to anything. Although, I would advise that sometimes we should be wary of what we THINK we want. In Star Trek, The Motion Picture, Spock described the evil satellite run-amok as, "...only knowing that it wants. It knows not what." It's fine to want things or to set goals for yourself. Yet, you should be realistic about what it may really mean to do those things. It's a long road to a long career. Good work gets recognized one way or another. John Lasseter, of Pixar, started out wanting to emulate the Nine Old Men of Disney. Instead, he ended up as a key player of the 3D animation age. Is that something he could have known at age 21? Just hang in there. Make films. Earn experience on the job in any role you've got. Be the person that others want to work with for 8 hours a day, five days a week ... and then maybe, just maybe, you might be qualified to quote a passage from a Star Trek movie in an interview one day.



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